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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted of the educational role of the principal in elementary schools under two educational policy alternatives. The study joined perspectives on the role of the principal with policy initiatives to strengthen schooling along two lines: common high student performance standards for all and redesign of the connection between the system and the school to increase authority and resource decisions at the school level toward reaching those standards. Policy option one was high stakes and common student performance standards with authority and resources to reshape the school established by policy initiative at the school level. Option two was a situation in which schools were encouraged to create local student performance standards with gentle policy support but with modest decentralization of authority and resources. Seven elementary school principals, four working under the first option and three under the second. Principals' leadership was studied through profiles, audiotaped self-reflection and interview responses, and the principal's own developed action plan. These successful principals obviously were inventing a new form of educational leadership. Principals with the policy option that featured common performance standards and the authority to reach them had advantages in carrying out their leadership roles. Principals dealing with policy option two did not seem likely to be able to carry out their educational leadership roles in many cases, although they often worked heroically to carry out reform against strong odds. (Contains 35 references.) (SLD)

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN A POLICY CONTEXT: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STUDENT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ARE CLEAR?

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Evolution of the Role of the Principal as Educational Leader

School principals are thought to have the most critical role in implementing reform strategies toward improved students' results and a learning climate conducive for maximum achievement. However, the current educational reform trends across national settings are causing the role of the principal to become more complex, challenging, and ambiguous than ever before Leithwood, 1994 (ed.).

The role of the school principal/head has evolved dramatically over the last decade (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992; Odden, 1995; Murphy and Louis, 1994). The ideal principal/head in the 1980's was an instructional leader who focused on four key elements of reform. First, principals, as instructional leaders, were supposed to be responsible for defining the mission of the school and setting school goals (Murphy, 1990a). The goals emphasized traditional student achievement which effective principals/heads communicated to audiences both within and outside the school and allocated time at the school so that the vision could be attained.

Second, instructional leaders were to manage what Murphy (1990a) called the education production function: coordinating the curriculum, promoting quality instruction, conducting clinical supervision and teacher evaluation and appraisal, aligning instructional materials with curriculum goals, allocating and protecting instructional time, and monitoring student progress. Third, principals/heads were to promote an academic learning climate by establishing high expectations and standards for student behavior and for traditionally defined academic achievement, maintaining high visibility, and providing incentives for teachers and students. They were also supposed to promote and manage professional development efforts that often were isolated form instructional practice.

Finally, principals/heads were to develop a strong culture at the school that included a safe and orderly work environment, opportunities for meaningful student involvement, strong staff collaboration and cohesion, additional outside resources in support of the school goals, and stronger links between the home and the school. As it often turned out, the focus on culture was often quite disconnected from the instructional process at the school. In short, the tendency

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during this era was to place the burden for improvement upon the principal as the individual "strong instructional leader" in the organization.

Recent studies from many countries, however, report that school principals/heads did not carry out this role, and conclude that the role is no longer appropriate for contemporary schools. In synthesizing this research, Murphy (1994) points to dramatic changes in the work environment including a turbulent policy environment, and overwhelming scale and pace of change, and a new view of teacher involvement and expertise. The result has been role ambiguity and role overload of massive proportions for the school principal/head.

These international reform directions have resulted in principals working in an "increasingly turbulent policy environment [that] has important consequences for the organizational life of the school and for the principalship" (Vandenberghe, 1992, pp.24, 33; Goldring, 1992; cited from Murphy, 1994, pp.22-23).

In his literature review, Murphy (1994) examined four broad reform initiatives: school-based management, teaching for meaningful understanding, choice, and site-based decision making. It is clear that site-based management is much more generic than is devolution of authority as will be discussed later in this paper.

Additionally, Murphy (1994) and other researchers identified three reform dynamics that heighten the turbulence:

- Expectations have risen and the number of players has expanded
- "Increas[ing] the scale and complexity of school management tasks" (Bolam et al., 1992, p. 24)
- Adding "exponentially to the complexities and ambiguities of principaling" (Smylie et al., 1993, p. 10) "to the point where . . . some [principals are] in danger of sinking under pressure" (Earley, Baker, & Weindling, 1990, p. 10).

What is the current and emerging role of the principal in the current climate of school reform? Murphy (1994) investigated the changing nature of the role of the principal in schools undergoing restructuring transformational reform efforts. In general, Murphy (1994) identified

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some of the new characteristics of the principal in four major areas. The first area is leading from the center where rather than being at the top of a pyramid, the principal is now viewed as being at the center of a network. The second new area is enabling and supporting teacher success where the principal is not seen as line manager, but as a facilitator and an equal partner. The third area is managing reform, especially in spending more time on school management and administration due to augmentation of existing responsibilities and the addition of new tasks.

Finally, principals are extending the school community. Their role has changed through the need to actively promote schools, through the need to work with the school councils or governing boards, and through spending more time with parents (which may be due to increased accountability concerns associated with deregulation). An underlying assumption of Murphy's study (1994) is that the principal will likely return to a new view of educational leadership once the role expansion and transformational role are better established.

Recent Directions in Educational Reform

The emerging reform directions and trends across national settings suggest that the role of the principal will become more complex and demanding over the next ten years. The research of Baker and Linn (1995), Beare (1994), Beare and Boyd (1993), Caldwell (1996), Caldwell and Spinks (1992), Harman, Beare and Berkeley (1991), Thomas and Caldwell (1994), Whitty (1993), and others have focused on school reform and societal and educational trends congruent with Marsh (1995, 1996) as follows:

1. Clear performance standards across schools for student results.
2. Enhanced clarity about student performance standards and the improved assessment technology which will dramatically change the way teaching and learning take place.
3. Meaningful partnerships between students and the school where both have accountability linked to clear standards of student performance.
4. A shift from a rule-driven to a results-driven system where local schools have much greater authority and control of resources.

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5. New strategic partnerships with families and community agencies that will be characterized by new approaches to incentives and accountability, with shared but limited resources.

Many industrialized countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and western Europe have experienced educational trends similar to the United States.

Clear and common standards are at the heart of the this reform for high student performance. In a paper by Baker and Linn (1995), the authors cite that the new reforms emphasize high standards of expectation for all students. States such as Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky and California have developed or are currently developing standards for students in all academic areas. Additionally, countries such as England have a National Curriculum with clearly defined programs of study and attainment targets for expected standards of pupils' performance for each Key Stage. Common standards can help individual schools and principals focus on assisting students in their attainment of reaching the performance standards as well as provide a blueprint from which to align the school vision, goals, and resources.

Policy implementation research has often focused on school reforms directly rather than the development of the principal's role in such reforms (Odden, 1995; Murphy and Louis, 1994). Caldwell (1992) and Odden and Odden (1994) see the new role for the principal in a policy context where student performance standards are common across schools, and where schools have much greater authority to shape their school in the service of reaching those student performance standards. Policy alternatives such as whether school authority rests with the principal, a professionalized site council, or a community-based council, have strong influence on school restructuring (Mohrman and Wohlstetter, 1994). Similar policy alternatives about the locus and nature of accountability for school results and the educational responsibility of the principal as instructional leader have important bearing on school success.

However, Murphy's literature review does not directly address the policy option of having common performance standards or devolved authority. These two policy options reflect the research of Marsh (1995, 1996), Caldwell (1996), Odden (1995), and others with respect to

reform trends across national settings. More specifically, this option includes clear performance standards across schools with enhanced clarity and improved assessment technology coupled with a results-driven system where local schools have much greater authority and control of resources and the partnership between students and the school include accountability linked to clear standards of student performance.

Educational Leadership Strategies and the Role of the Principal in Two Policy Options.

What we know about the principal's role in these two policy options? There have been studies about the role of the principal in the context of these policy options. The works of Odden and Odden (1994) in Australia, with the work of Wohlstetter et al and Briggs, (1994) in studying site based managed schools, and the work of Caldwell (1996) in picturing two forthcoming stages of school reform that emphasize reform in teaching and learning.

Caldwell and Spinks (1992: chapters four through seven) tried to capture the changes in the role of the principal in two policy contexts. They identify and define four types of leadership used in self-managing schools: (a) cultural leadership where the principal helps to ensure the creation and sustaining of a culture of excellence in a climate of change, (b) strategic leadership where the principal helps to ensure that the school has a plan for the future that takes into account broad educational trends and issues and which place the school in a favorable position, (c) educational leadership where the principal helps to nurture a learning community by the enhancement of the role of teachers, parents and students in the school, and (d) responsive leadership where the principal helps the school to be responsive to community and individual concerns.

Although the dimensions of leadership proposed by Caldwell and Spinks (1992) clearly encompass the ideas of instructional leadership through its focus on enhancing teaching and learning experiences, and transformational leadership through its emphasis on the cultural and symbolic dimensions (Gurr, 1995), it is not clear what important educational leadership strategies principals from England and the United States perceive they will use over the next ten years as they lead their schools in educational reform. Additionally, Caldwell (1996) has written

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in an extremely clarifying way on educational policy contexts that principals operate in which differ in terms of student performance standards and local authority and resource control.

Without the leadership of the principal, current reforms such as standards-based instruction, will not result in more productive teaching and learning in the schools. M. Hayes Mizell, director of the program for student achievement at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, recently stated, "The successful implementation of standards-based reform is absolutely dependent on the leadership of principals, and that leadership must be in evidence at the classroom level as well as throughout the school." ; "...principals need to exert leadership to ensure that this reform is integral to the school's structure, operations, and culture."

Statement of the Problem

While there is evidence that the perceived role of the principal is changing in response to current reform trends, it is not clear what the emerging educational leadership role of the principal will be. More specifically, there is not much information on the role of the principal as he or she is influenced by two policy initiatives to strengthen schooling: common high student performance standards for all students and the redesign of the connection between the system and the school to increase authority and resource decisions at the school level in the service of reaching those high student performance standards.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to focus on the educational role of the principal in elementary schools when two policy alternatives were used. This study joins perspectives on the role of the principal with policy initiatives to strengthen schooling along two lines: common high student performance standards for all students and redesign of the connection between the system and the school to increase authority and resource decisions at the school level in the service of reaching those high performance standards. These emerging reform directions often the result of policy initiatives, are having and will continue to have a powerful impact on the principal and the

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type of leadership strategies that they will need to employ to facilitate students' achievement of reaching common high student performance standards.

More specifically, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the important educational leadership strategies perceived by elementary principals from the United States and elementary principals from England currently in leading their schools educational reform in their respective countries?
2. How do elementary principals from England and the United States perceive they themselves will use important educational leadership strategies in the next ten years as they lead their schools in educational reform in their respective countries?
3. What are the similarities and differences that exist between national groups of elementary principals both currently and in the future in the usage of important educational leadership strategies when two policy alternatives are used? (Policy option 1 and 2)

In short, this study seeks to gain an understanding of the development of the principal's role in standards-based reform with the devolution of authority and resources to the school sites.

Methodology

Overview. Data collection took place at the summer 1996 USC International Principal's Institute and focused on the educational role of the principal in elementary schools when two policy alternatives were used: Policy option 1 -- high stakes and common student performance standards are used, and extensive authority and resources to reshape the school in the service of helping students reach those performance standards have been established by policy initiative at the school level versus Policy option 2 -- schools are encouraged to create local student performance standards with gentle policy support, and decentralization of authority and resources has been modest.

Sample. Seven elementary school principals/heads were included in the study - - four from policy option 1 and three from policy option 2. Since policy option 1 is rarely found in the

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United States, one of the four participants was from a Kentucky elementary school and the other three were from English elementary schools. All participants had been in their elementary role for at least three years and were advanced in their work as transformational leaders. The two sets of participants were similar in their ethnicity, but ranged in age and gender. All involved were participants in the International Principal's Institute held at the University of Southern California in July 1996.

The number of principals/heads was limited to seven so that intensive data collection could be undertaken with each individual. Intensive data collection was needed to analyze the important educational leadership strategies used and perceived to be used in the next decade by the principals sampled for this research.

The sample was identified in four stages: (a) nomination by principal investigator, and the director of the 1996 Summer International Principal's Institute; (b) elementary principals that participated in the 1996 USC International Principal's Institute; (c) selection of principals/heads that represented the two policy option contexts; (d) all participants had been in their elementary role for at least three years and were advanced in their work as transformational leaders.

The sample limitation was imposed for several reasons: (1) to analyze perceptions of principals/heads as to what important educational leadership strategies they currently utilize as they lead their schools in educational reform, (2) the need for depth in identifying the important and emerging educational leadership strategies leading edge principals from England and the United States perceive they themselves will utilize over the next ten years as they lead their schools in educational reform, and (3) the effort to analyze the similarities and differences between national groups of elementary principals both currently and in the future in the usage of important educational leadership strategies when two policy alternatives are used.

Instrumentation. This study was exploratory. No instrument was available, to the knowledge of the research team, that would yield the desired information; therefore, interview

guides and questionnaire instruments were developed by the principal investigator for this study. Table 1 is a data collection reference chart that highlights the various types of instrumentation used for the research. Additionally, the chart serves as a guide as to how each instrument elicited information in response to research questions for this study.

Instruments used for this qualitative research included:

I. Profiles

A. School Questionnaire

This instrument gave the researcher a broad picture of the school context that the principal/head worked in. Instructions for the questionnaires were standardized and concise.

B. Principal Questionnaire

This instrument gave the researcher a broad picture of the individual that participated in the purposive study. Instructions for the questionnaires were standardized and concise.

II. Four Audio-Taped Guided Self-Reflection Sessions

Each participant was given four separate one page outlines with some focused questions and statements to verbally respond to with respect to the purpose of the study. The participants individually recorded their responses to the self-guided interview into a cassette player. This occurred four separate times throughout the data collection period. The researcher had the tapes transcribed for clarity and accuracy in the analysis of the data.

III. Interviews

Each participant was individually interviewed by the researcher for approximately one hour during the data collection period. The semi-structured interview focused around questions and statements related to the purpose of the study. Each interview was audio-taped to ensure response accuracy. Tapes were transcribed for clarity and accuracy in the analysis of the data.

IV. Audio-Taped Guided Response to Session by Brian Caldwell and Peter Hill

Following a day-long presentation entitled, "Leadership for Effective Teaching and Lasting School Reform" by two prominent Australian researchers, Brian Caldwell and Peter Hill, each participant was given a one page outline with some focused questions and statements to verbally respond to with respect to the session and the purpose of the study. The participants individually recorded their responses into a cassette player. The tapes were transcribed for clarity and accuracy in the analysis of the data.

V. Plan of Action Project

On the final day of the 1996 Summer International Principal's Institute, each participant developed a plan of action for their school. This project required not only a summation of what was learned, but also an analysis of their own school in terms of strengths, weakness and opportunities. The participants verbally presented their plan of action to a group of colleagues. Each presentation was recorded. The tapes were transcribed for clarity and accuracy in the analysis of the data.

Data Collection. The calendar influenced the schedule for data collection as the sample of participants were in attendance at the International Principal's Institute in July, 1996. Participants were assigned a letter to identify them for data analysis and to protect their anonymity.

The two questionnaires were completed on the first two days of the institute. The participants individually recorded their responses to the self-guided interviews, session reaction, and final project presentation over day three to day ten of the institute. Face-to-face interviews took place on day seven, eight and nine of the institute. The entire process of data collection occurred throughout the ten days of the International Principal's Institute in July 1996. All tapes were later transcribed for clarity and accuracy in the analysis of the data. Information from the two questionnaires was transferred into a data base for analysis purposes.

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Findings

The Nature of the Vision Held by the School Principal

Principals/heads in the study were concerned with establishing an important vision for their school. The analysis of this vision is recorded in Figure 1. Figure 1 addresses whether the principal had such a vision, whether the vision focused on student learning, whether the vision focused primarily on curriculum and instruction, and/or whether the vision focused primarily on student results.

Several findings emerge from this figure:

1. All principals across both policy options had a strong vision and had a vision focused on student learning.
2. In addition, principals in policy option 2 had a vision focused primarily on curriculum and instruction, and they emphasized the connection of various pieces of curriculum and instruction. However, their vision of teaching and learning did not have a clear connection to student results.
3. Principals in policy option 1 had a vision that focused primarily on student results. Their focus on curriculum and instruction was always strongly linked to student results, and rarely existed as a vision about teaching and learning in isolation.

Further analysis from the interviews and action plans of principals revealed several other themes in the nature of the vision held by these school principals. Principals in policy option 1 had a vision based on well established student performance standards which were already developed, primarily at the system rather than the local school level. These principals were then concerned about linking curriculum and instruction and management activities of the school to that vision of student results. In contrast, principals in policy option 2 had a vision that focused primarily on the process of establishing the results for the first time. They often reported these results were just emerging and that working on establishing the standards was the major focus of their work.

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For example, principals in Policy Option 2 report:

> The school where I am at, our student standards are in the process of being created. We do have some outcomes, student outcomes, in the areas of the different core curriculums in technology, in effective communication, and we have some performance indicators about how children should achieve. However, specific standards in each curriculum area are at this point being developed. We have currently in existence, our language art standards, and now our math standards. Those all came as a result of the vision of our superintendent. It was the vision of our superintendent and our Board of Education, and they did that after much reflection on research and some of the reform movements in the United States. (Participant F)

> I think we are still trying to define what world class standards are, and we have this challenge from our superintendent and the Board to define and then to be able to create what world class school would look like, and to be very much on that cutting edge and the competition with schools not only in California but world-wide to make sure that our delivery system is at the top and it is not mediocre, so that has always been the challenge. (Participant G)

Creating high-quality student performance standards is a high priority for principals in policy option 2, and they are working very hard at it. However, it is clearly still a work in progress.

In contrast, principals in policy option 1 had more limited resources overall, but they managed to target these resources more directly on student results. Not only have student performance standards been established, but principals have moved beyond to link many decisions about the school to high student performance standards. For example, one principal reported:

> The school vision and school mission is to instill a love of learning in all students and as I commented before, our financial authoritative decisions are made around that vision that all students will learn, and that all children can learn and can learn at high levels. (Participant D)

Principals in policy option 2 clearly have the advantage of established standards upon which they can build many decisions for the school.

Moreover, principals in policy option 1 talked about the importance of having school accountability, but were in a context where such accountability was clearly imposed. In one

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case, it was imposed by the state as accountability for the school to have student performance improvement against a system-generated improvement target. In England, the accountability was more of a market force that pushed the school to have high student performance on national examinations so that their school would look relatively good compared to other schools, and therefore they were able to attract new students as customers for the continued viability of their school.

Principals in policy option 1 also had more leverage to deal with aspects of the school that were not satisfactory in relation to high student performance standards. For example, one principal reports:

> We cannot allow children to suffer at the hands of teachers, who are quite clearly incapable of dealing with this focused issue on standards. (Participant C)

Other principals in policy option 1 also reported that they were addressing aspects that were not connected to high student performance standards, and not merely trying to strengthen the positive integration of schooling to the student performance standards.

In turn, principals in policy option 2 talked about the importance of school accountability, but rarely had any formal or systemic structure or strategy of accountability that operated on the school. Principals in policy option 2 like the idea, but were not walking the talk as yet.

The Orientation of the Principal in Working Toward Reform: Individual Key Player or Acting through Organizational Structures

In the study, some principals clearly were working as individual key players in carrying out the reform efforts at their school. They saw themselves as a catalyst or major facilitator acting on others in their environment. Other principals clearly had a more team-based orientation and saw themselves as acting through their organizational structures and climates. Figure 2 summarizes the orientation of the principal as an individual key player, or as an actor through organizational structures.

The main finding from the figure is that principals in policy option 1 worked primarily through system-wide learning organizational structures to achieve their vision, while principals

in policy option 2 worked primarily as individual key players to achieve that vision. Principals in policy option 1 use team structures to collaboratively carry out the work of being a standards-driven learning environment. For example, one principal in policy option 1 spoke of how the school staff as a team were working to improve curriculum in relation to student standards and were strengthening the structures such as departments and grade level leaders to coordinate that curriculum improvement. This principal reports:

> I think that in terms of the curriculum itself we have spent a lot of time trying to put structures into place to accommodate all of the reform. I think the priority now has to be stabilizing everything. (Participant A)

Creating new structures for work and a culture of hard work were closely integrated efforts for principals in policy option 1. In contrast, principals in policy option 2 are using structures primarily as an extension of their own efforts to establish standards-driven reform at the school.

Moreover, principals in policy option 1 established team structures that had specific student performance improvement targets. So the principals in policy option 1 not only have team structures, but these structures had more specific student performance improvement targets as part of their mission. For example:

> We have a team structure in the school and the team targets that are set which then lead on to student focused targets. (Participant B)

Finally, principals in policy option 1 use the team structures and improvement targets as a vehicle for problem solving to improve student performance.

> The teachers and I are totally committed to looking at the problems we have and solving them, and not putting our head in the sand and actually feeling there are no solutions. We will find them. (Participant A)

Principals in policy option 1 described a number of more specific strategies and culture-building activities to support these problem-solving, improvement target-centered teams.

In contrast, principals in policy option 2 are working to establish the team structures in the data driven improvement strategies based on student performance. All the principals in

policy option 2 describe the very hard work and difficult circumstances involved in creating schools focused on improved student performance. One principal described it well when he said:

> Probably one of the greatest dilemmas in creating and using and actually monitoring the students standards is that they are new, they are just being developed, and they do need some revision and also the fact that our assessments are not yet fully developed to measure our students progress towards these standards. Therefore, it is somewhat difficult to get an accurate analysis of data in terms of how our students are doing in meeting these standards and how we are monitoring that. So, those are some of the dilemmas that, as a leader, I face. One of the other dilemmas is how to make sure that parents understand what the standards are, and that creates the need to inform them in written manner, as well as in oral and public forums. (Participant F)

In short, principals in policy option 2 are carrying out heroic and highly energetic efforts to build programs and build support both in the school and in the community for the reforms.

Principals in policy option 2 have worked hard as individuals to draw other staff and the community into the work on student performance standards. One principal in policy option describes the work as follows:

> I have been able to work with the staff as far as staff involvements so they feel very comfortable that we work together and that we make the decisions for our school. I wish it were so with the parents, so we would get all of our stake-holders involved, but that probably is not true. The district pretty much leaves me alone. (Participant H)

> I try to be able to share that with the faculty. I try to go out and develop programs with the faculty and see that these are going to work. I also spend a tremendous amount of time personally in the community and all over talking about reform and restructuring and getting support for the school. There are always limits. How much can you do? (Participant H)

How much can you do? This question was frequently on the minds of the highly energetic principals of policy option 2 who worked as individuals without much support from their system to establish stronger student performance at the school.

In contrast, principals in policy option 1 are more using national reform directions as a orientation to building support internally and with boards of governors at the school. One principal in policy option 1 described the systemic support in several terms, including:

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> The national curriculum has required schools to totally refocus the way that they use their time and deploy their resources. To this extent, we are involving our governors, to our board of trustees in this process and the governors contain members, who are parents, and we should involve parents in this as well. (Participant B)

The systemic support moved the work of the school forward in reaching student performance and also created a more collaborative culture, including work structures, problem solving mechanisms and improvement targets to get there.

Principals in policy option 2, however, were able to establish more rapport and trust, partly because it was a main focus, and as they saw it, a necessary stage toward getting buy-in support for the establishment of standards and reforms. They were a healthier family who had to talk more together to resolve critical issues. They did not have the national policy levers that forced the change on the school to the same extent as policy option 1.

Principals in policy option 2 did not get the clear direction for reform from the wider education system. It wasn't that there was no direction to the school from the wider system, however, it was that they were getting many and sometimes conflicting messages.

Principals in policy option 2 had to work hard to establish their independence, which they saw as a positive goal from the system, whereas principals in policy option 1 used the system in a positive sense to support school directed reform. One principal in policy option 2 described this effort at establishing independence from the district, as follows:

> Education forum trends in our county and state - we are now looking at the states in how we are teaching English and math. There is a great deal of confusion in the state. I think there is a great deal of confusion. We are a 1274 demonstration site, which I think should be a center for taking a look at what works as far as reform and restructuring, and I don't see it, and that is unfortunate. The district, LA Unified's basic education reform is LEARN which is trying to devolve authority to the school and getting stake-holder involvement and setting up the district offices to be support rather than dictating. It sounds wonderful in theory. I don't see it happening. In fact, as a Phase-I LEARN School, we have a lot more ability to be left alone. We also have very little leadership from the district, and in terms of setting anything other than some goals that they have decided to set, in regards to our customer satisfaction survey, in regards to the number of kids in AP and Algebra, but it does not seem to be a coherent program. (Participant H)

> Our school is trying to put together a reform package through New American Schools in our Los Angeles Learning Center that talks about student achievement and talks about

> governors and what we call the enabling component which tries to remove barriers from learning through health and social services and staff training. It also does talk about parent involvement. I think that the New American School in our Los Angeles Learning Center plan would be very similar to what is really at the cutting edge of systemic reform, but we have not focused as much as we should be on the classroom. (Participant H)

Even so, this principal needed to use many informal lines of communication and personal friendships to get system support and his work accomplished through the district. It took an incredible amount of time and energy for this principal even to establish this level of independence. The independence was mostly a matter of respect and personal connections, rather than a structure or systemic set of direct student performance directions for the school.

Linking Management Responsibilities (Functions)

Further analysis of the data suggested several additions to this basic theme. Principals in the two policy options carried out their leadership responsibilities in several distinctive ways. These patterns are summarized in Figure 3. Two key findings emerge from the figure, as follows:

1. Principals in policy option 1 and 2 were actively doing all the functions identified by Murphy.
2. However, principals in policy option 1 were doing them more explicitly to support high student performance whereas principals in policy option 2 were doing the functions more as an end in themselves partly because of a distraction caused by their school and district context and change processes.

The difference in orientation between principals in policy option 1 who were more explicitly focusing on high student performance as opposed to principals in policy option 2 who were doing more of the functions as an end in themselves became an important distinction in understanding the particular work these principals were doing.

Principals in policy option 1 were better able to integrate all aspects of the school toward helping students reach results. There were many examples of this integration across all of the school principals in policy option 1. One of these principals summarized a discussion of many more specific strategies as follows:

> Everything that we do as far as the curriculum, staffing or finances is focused toward increasing student scores and enhancing our academic program. (Participant D)

Notice the connection of curriculum, staffing and finances as broad dimensions of the school which are integrated to enhance student performance.

More specifically, they were able to target school based resource management toward student results and had a deep understanding of these connections. For example:

> I think there is a genuine link between improved student performance and school-based resource management. I think primarily because the school holds the staff training budget, the budget for staff development, and because of this, we have greater flexibility on how we use it in preparing staff for courses. The courses we use are very much linked to our school development plan. As we focus on the learning issues, we give financial support to those. We could never have done that without school-based resource management, and I think this will have a positive impact on student performance. (Participant C)

Notice that this participant talks about school-based resource management and its connection to staffing, teacher assignments, and the school development plan.

In contrast, principals in policy option 2 frequently had considerable categorical funding, but had more difficulty integrating it and targeting it toward student achievement. Some principals in policy option 2 had twice the resource level per student as did principals in policy option 1. So money per se was not a major roadblock. Yet principals in policy option 2 had such constraints on the use of the money and such convoluted ways to generate the money that it became a serious problem for them. For example, one principal in policy option 2 comments:

> Because of the ability to get grants and different things, we have been able to pretty much give teachers everything they want, so budget is not a critical issue at our school as it may be at others. I think there is a link between school-based resources and student achievement, but not as big a link as everybody says. (Participant H)

Principals in policy option 2 had a general idea about linking resources to student achievement, but not nearly the success, the school structures, the performance targets or the control of key factors such as staffing at the school that would allow them to have a positive experience.

Principals in policy option 1 were also better able to analyze student performance data and do strategic planning at the school based on that data. For principals in policy option 1, common and dependable data linked to thinking about the right issues is quite important. For example:

> It just tells me that you can have lots of very good theories about structures in schools, but at the end of the day, do they matter if you are not focusing on the right issues, and it is the use of data that helps you focus on the right issues. I think someone earlier in the week said that you can have the most wonderfully structured organization and the most brilliant and efficient administrator, principal or head teacher, but if they are not looking at the right issues, they are going totally in the wrong direction. (Participant C)

The use of common data and data analysis tools help principals in policy option 1 conduct more dependable and creative analyses and learn from other schools in how to use this information meaningfully.

Moreover, the analysis of data and student achievement helped direct improvement strategies at the school. One principal summarized this connection of student achievement and improvement strategies as follows:

> Our analysis of data and student achievement helps us in the area of professional development, assignment of staff and alignment of our curriculum if need be. (Participant D)

This principal worked in a school that had many categorical programs in a US setting, but still found the state direction toward improvement targets and strategic plans helpful and powerful in improving student performance.

In turn, principals in policy option 2 found real difficulty in identifying which data to look at or finding effective ways to engage the school in conversations about the use of that data. Yet principals in policy option 2 had made important progress, about which they were very proud:

> I look at teacher grades all the time. I get print-outs to see what kind of grades teachers are giving. We talk about it, and actually look at test scores. I come in and out of the classrooms. I don't spend as much time with that as I should. (Participant H)

> I am pretty proud of the fact that our standards are very articulated with parents, very articulated with kids. They are discussed at conference time. Our report cards are starting to move towards reflecting those standards, instead of just a traditional kind of report card. We have a primary report card that is more developmental, more narrative, and it is moving up into the upper grade, and is probably where we will be spending some time redeveloping their report card. I think the assessment part that will be coming in this year, will be an important part to see how much more information that we can get from the standards that we set up. (Participant G)

> My role in using standards at school, is to continually talk and draw people into conversations that pinpoint the importance of using the standards of when I visit classrooms, I try to point out the standards that are being met by the student work that is being done or that is displayed in the room, and by continually bringing that up as a focus of our school-wide effort, that of setting a tone for the school. (Participant F)

But because the data are so informal, it is hard to use it effectively in policy option 2. Note that the report card had been changed for participant G, but the powerful student performance assessments still had not been created. At another point in that interview, it became clear that these locally developed performance assessments were a long-term project which would not be finished soon.

Principals in policy option 1 were able to establish learning organizations driven by student results. One principal described this learning community driven by results as follows:

> I will come back to what I said that the school culture has to change to be a learning organization. I think essentially that is what it is going to become. It is a place where all people learn, teachers are learning as well. Not just pupils learning, when I talk about learning organization, I mean whole, everybody associated with that organization is a learner. The principal is a learner, as well as a leader, and what I hope is that the school culture will become is a culture of learning and leadership, such that even children through K-6 will be seen as leaders on a positive sense. They may have teams in their own classes, they may team up in situations, but each child will be given the opportunity to lead those teams, to have leadership experience and appreciate the problems of leadership and different dynamics that are... (Participant C)

These learning organizations driven by results were an important part of the success for principals in policy option 1.

Finally, principals in policy option 1 needed to turn to the community to provide extra resources to support the reform directions established by the school. Resources were in very short supply at these schools so the principals increasingly needed to turn to the community for

extra resources to support their results-driven programs. One principal described this effort as follows:

> I also spend a lot of time going and talking to business people, trying to get sponsorship, which I have been fairly successful at, but this does take a lot of time, and it is an unusual thing really, for a head teacher to have to do. (Participant B)

> So it means that my role as head teacher is more likely to focus on going outside the school making wider connections and net-works with other possible sources of funding. (Participant B)

In contrast, principals in policy option 2 frequently worked on community buy-in to the school more generally and sometimes in the service in getting agreement about the standards and reform directions themselves. Figure 4 summarizes these differences in orientation.

Strategies of Successful Principals

Consistent across policy settings, principals/heads in this study combined both personal and positional educational leadership in their schools which focused on student learning. At a personal level, they developed over time a very deep understanding of teaching and learning and the way that relates to the new student outcomes. This learning was credible to teachers and parents and built on a moral base linked to student results. These principals were able to persuade others through mentoring, coaching, and planning, but in the end, their influence was both substantive educationally as well as collaborative and transforming.

Principals/heads in self-managing schools in policy option 1 had more guidance from the system about critical student outcomes, which would account for success at the school. They were better prepared to help the school internalize the importance of those system results and understand them in educational as well as political terms. At the same time, these principals were excellent at reframing problems within the school to identify the most powerful means to

help students reach those systemically-defined student results. They were better equipped to marry the concept of market niche, customer satisfaction and student results through reframing problems so that all three became interrelated and mutually supporting priorities.

Principals also thought in terms of "value added" and improvement targets for their student results and quality indi- tors. Consequently, the school was frequently focused on performance for all students, in the context of students at other schools as well as the relative improvement these students had made, and the role the school had played in accomplishing that.

At the same time, the school had a vision of teaching and learning that mattered--the vision represented the "best bets" as to what schooling conditions would help students achieve the desired student results. Stated differently, the key indicators at the school operated at two levels--the learning environment indicators as part of the vision, and the result indicators which this vision was designed to achieve. On the one hand, the vision was robust in incorporating many dimensions of teaching and learning, while the other hand remained flexible and continually rethought in relation to the results.

Moreover, the vision itself had indicators of success and became more than a vague picture of the desired school. Faculty, staff, community and others could map the relative success the school in accomplishing its vision both in terms of the vision being implemented and the vision being powerfully related to student results. In short, the school had clear results indicators with improvement targets and a view of value added for all students. Linked to this was a powerful and integrated school vision which had indicators of implementation and ongoing flexible mechanisms for connecting vision to result. The connections represent the best of reflection, of learning community and cultural and transformation view of leadership.

Principals in policy option 1 created structures where many leaders emerged at the school—al with an important educational focus which they built into the structure, culture and results focus. Principals/heads in policy option 1 also used their positional power to structure the school so that deep problems, important results and school restructuring hinged on a powerful view of student results, grounded in system level standards. In their positional role, these leaders sorted out governance structures from management and implementation structures, even as these evolved continuously. They helped governance groups focus on student results and monitor these results, while the groups stayed out of micro managing the school (Marsh, 1995; Tucker and Codding, 1995). Conversely, the principals/heads in policy context 1 established a set of cross-role groups that provided a variety of implementation and management structures, as will be discussed below.

One way principals/heads from both policy options reframed problems was through the use of the four lenses proposed by Deal and Kennedy (1982). In reframing the problems, the lenses helped illuminate different dimensions of the problem itself as well as the desired resolution. They had a "nose" for the right problems. Schools faced many problems and often were almost paralyzed by the overwhelming number and interconnectedness of the problems. Principals from policy option 2 acted as individual key players and as school leaders attempted to solve these problems one at a time. School principals/heads from policy option 1 were more easily able to reframe patterns of problems into fewer large problems focused directly on student results and the means to help students achieve them.

Both groups of principals/heads thought about results and quality of the school in several ways. However, policy option 2 principals were able to combine system defined student performance results with local indicators of student growth and customer satisfaction whereas

policy option 2 principals were limited by the policy context and were only able to use local indicators of student performance. This connection was both political and educationally powerful, grew out of the collective view of important education at the school as stimulated by the principal, and served to focus strategic and operational efforts at the school. Principals were able to understand and articulate the deep meaning of these results while explaining them in concrete terms to various audiences.

Successful principals/heads knew the attributes of good teaching/learning and the pragmatics of what teaching and learning ought to look like in various subjects and for various grade levels. The value of this understanding was not to have the principal/head serve as expert who demanded or monitored improvement for individual teachers. Instead, this understanding led to collaboration with team leaders of high performance work teams able to carry out powerful instruction and instructional improvement efforts—the principal/head's role was more strategic than clinical and very different from the previous instructional leadership paradigm. Successful principals/heads also focused teaching and learning on the success for all students through moral persuasion, use of data, structuring work teams to accommodate varieties of students and a culture that promoted student success, whatever it took.

Successful principals/heads also had networks and a strong understanding of emerging but promising learning approaches that would greatly enhance the power of teaching and learning at the school. They helped the school benchmark its most important successful practices across the whole world. For example, many schools recently have benefited extensively from the thinking about teaching and learning found in China and Japan (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). This provocative and helpful view of curriculum design, teacher collaboration and careful instructional practice has deeply influenced teachers in many other countries. As Odden (1995)

reports, principals/heads are going to need to view "effective programs" in several ways: as the best available insight about powerful teaching and learning while also as only an approximation of what might ultimately be the most effective learning environments linked to the school's own particular students and results. Moreover, successful principals/heads worked to plan backwards from desired student learning and therefore, provide tools for targeting and teaching learning on these results. Principals/heads helped work teams establish and carry out improvement strategies such as evaluation, aligning instructional materials with curriculum, and managing information about student and program performance.

Successful principals helped the school use these indicators of success as anchors for decisions, program priorities and support services. Since the world was increasingly dynamic and fast-changing, successful principals were able to anticipate changes in societal directions and anticipate the consequences for indicators.

Successful principals developed strategic and system thinking in a way that was infectious across the organization. They engaged cross-role work teams in creating strategic plans for their on team as well as school-wide plans, all driven by result indicators. The plans linked the organizational and governance changes in the school to the instructional improvement and ultimately student results, customer satisfaction and quality indicators, and represented a compact between various constituencies responsible for the school. The plans embodied long-term strategic planning linked to action planning on a yearly basis as proposed by Caldwell and Spinks (1992) and Holmes and Davies (1994). The planning/thinking also linked management resources to the substance of the schools, and had revision cycles that mattered in terms of resource allocation, program assessment and accountability. Finally, the plans were short, results-focused, easily understood by all the groups and publicly acknowledged and displayed.

Linked Management Support to Work Structures and Organizational Redesign. Marsh (1992) found that educational leaders had a holistic understanding of the interface of management supports to the educational efforts of the school as linked to strong student results and institutional success. These leaders were distinguished by their ability to understand the connections--an understanding composed of educational connections, political savvy and organizational dynamics. What made these principals/heads strong educational leaders was their ability to structure support services connected to important work structures that helped students learn. These connections entailed, in part, redirecting traditional functions such as fiscal and personnel so that work teams had greater control of the decisions in these support areas. Moreover, successful principals helped design and transform the way these support services are carried out through greatly enhanced technology and efficiency, a wider set of meaningful users of the support services, and easier access to the support services in user-friendly modalities. For example, successful schools were able to establish new and dramatically better information support services that decentralized information from the district office and made it much more accessible and useful within the school. These new management information systems also included new kinds of information found in student learning portfolios that greatly enhanced instruction that helped students learn effectively.

Additionally, successful principals were able to increase the management support services and fiscal resources available in service of the critically important educational program. They carefully distinguished cash cows from vitally important educational services (see Davies and Ellison, 1994). They also developed strong management support staff closely integrated with the high performance work teams so that the principal as an individual was not operating the management support services. The principal did, however, manage the linkage of the

management support services to the high performance work teams in ways that greatly enhanced an empowered team performance.

Successful principals/heads needed many skills and competencies to make the strategic thinking/planning effective. They needed a deep understanding of the results of the school and the possible effects of various alternative strategic directions. They needed process skills in engaging others in this thinking and ways to portray and reframe problems within the strategic thinking/planning period. They needed to engage others in taking seriously the planning/thinking process as the basis for access to resources and accomplishment of their workgroups. Finally, principals needed to help identify results while clearly staying out of micromanaging the process to achieve those results.

Successful principals worked in ways similar to Mohrman's (1994) view that schools must be restructured and recultured into high performance work teams before the actual changes in teaching and learning are carried out. Establishing these meaningful works structures distinguished successful principals/heads over the decade--other principals/heads tried to reculture without restructuring at the same time, and achieved little in the end. Aside from the personal dimensions of establishing work groups, principals/heads needed to align responsibility, authority and accountability so that individuals are designated groups who are responsible for efforts also have the authority and accountability for their accomplishments. Successful principals/heads helped establish these workgroups not by management functions, but rather by integrating the various dimensions of an effective learning environment so that a group of students could be successful. Principals/heads need to help define the appropriate size of workgroups, including establishing small schools units where personal connection and communication could be maximized. Successful principals also helped realigned incentives and support structures for these workgroups.

Successful principals/heads worked hard to help colleagues build professional capacity and effective learning communities at the school. The stronger capacity was needed by the high performance work teams in the form of expertise and inventiveness that helped them do their

work. Principals/heads helped with building networks and multiple collaboration arrangements that supported teacher connection outside and within the school. Capacity building of several forms was promoted: Training that included modeling, practice and feedback; collaboration and planning; inquiry and problem-solving. The capacity building also used the criteria proposed by Little (1993) for good professional development: a) meaningful intellectual, social and emotional development with ideas and materials, b) explicit accounting of the context of teaching and the experience of teachers, c) support for informed dissent, 3) classroom practice in the larger contexts of school practice and purposes, e) supported techniques and perspectives of inquiry, and f) governance that featured bureaucratic constraint and balanced individual and institutional interests.

Successful principals/heads also created new partnerships for teaching and learning--a strategic approach to engaging students and the community more powerfully as direct support for strong student performance. At best, the student and the school's learning environment are in a delicate "dance of learning" where both partners must work together in a complex and unique way. Schools that intended to improve teaching and learning only through the improvement of high performance work teams and instructional strategies missed the opportunity to get the equal participating from students. Successful principals/heads understood the need for student motivation and hard work and the community organization and family supports that helped students be engaged in this way. Consequently, successful principals/heads transformed partnerships with community agencies from bureaucratic connections to support services for powerful student learning. At the same time, they widened the available school resources to beyond the school setting and the school day. These new partnerships require more than communication; they required focus on student learning and the interrelated set of strategies and supports that helped students do well.

In summary, what will make leadership distinctive for leaders in self-managed schools are several features. First, these leaders will have linked the professional development and learning community work to the student performance and other results in a powerful and

accountable way. Second, these schools will have created high performance and other results in a powerful and accountable way. Second, these schools will have created high performance work teams so that the organizational/change process context will be especially rich for the capacity and learning communities. Finally, these principals/heads will have redesigned the management support functions to support professional development and learning, and will have redirected resources controlled by the high performance work teams to invest heavily in professional development, and incentives for high performance (Odden, 1995). Bold redirection of resources and very strong learning communities driven by results were among the most distinctive strategies of successful school principals/heads.

Conclusions and Discussion

A New View of Educational Leadership. The first conclusion from the study is that successful principals/heads have invented a new form of educational leadership. These leaders have joined the transformational power of collaboration and leading from the middle to the high performance work teams where a new form of expertise and learning community driven by results are dominant. With the new interface of management support for the educational efforts at these schools, these principals have had a strategic influence on internalizing the results, and planning backwards to redesign the school to help all students meet high performance expectations. These schools are able to dramatically improve teaching and learning, not because the principal/head set others to do the work; but instead, because the principal/head has a new form of educational leadership that provides substantive and cultural leadership to the transformation of the school linked to the high performance organizational arrangements that support the results-driven collective focus.

How to make sense of the strong educational leadership role of these principals in light of Murphy's literature review? Recall that Murphy's (1994) review found that across national boundaries, principals were moving toward a new leadership role characterized by increased management responsibilities and transformational leadership than by direct educational

leadership. The answer may lie in several factors. It could be that the educational leadership role of these principals was just the heroic efforts of unusual principals.

But two other explanations combine to provide a picture of both a more optimistic and meaningful educational role of the principal and a greater likelihood that most principals could engage in this form of leadership at their schools. First, the principals in this study were not involved in just any reform, but instead, with improving student performance through a systemic policy option which connected common student performance standards and devolved authority and fiscal control. By contrast, it may be that Murphy's site-based management and decision-making are more isolated reform elements. The importance of certain policy options, as portrayed in this study, will be addressed in the final section of this paper.

. Second, Caldwell (1996) has been examining school reform across national settings and found three stages or tracks of work, as follows:

> Track 1: Creating systems of self-managing schools in the pubic sector (time horizon 5 years)
>
> Track 2: Unrelenting focus on restructuring learning and teaching in all schools (time horizon 10 years)
>
> Track 3: Reengineering school education: a gestalt for schooling for the knowledge society (time horizon 25 years)

Murphy's literature review seems focused on the first track where schoolwide governance and management changes predominate. Principals in policy option 1 were involved in systems where the educational reform was moving beyond track 1; in those settings, the educational role of the principal seems to be much stronger both in focusing on schoolwide strategic leadership and in more direct planning/involvement in educational issues much closer to the classroom.

This new educational leadership on the part of the principal is not a return to the old principal-as-director view of instructional leadership. But it is a feasible and tangible role which

we believe will be crucial to educational reform over the next decade. Marsh (1997, April) provides a more extensive view of what such leadership will entail.

The New Educational Leadership: Policy Implications of the Importance of Policy Context. A second conclusion from this study is the importance of the policy context for shaping and supporting the educational work of the principal. Principals in the policy option featuring common student performance standards and devolved authority to get there had advantages in carrying out the role as educational leader, including: team structures at the school, improvement targets related to the teams, strong and accessible data relevant to student performance, and problem-solving arrangements and culture linked to all of the above. They also have many other advantages in carrying out their educational leadership role.

It is unlikely that principals in policy option 2 will be able to carry out educational leadership roles in many cases. In this study, policy option 2 principals worked as heroic individuals to carry out the reforms against strong odds. Marsh (1996) found that many schools were not able to establish common standards at the local school level and many authors, including Hentschke (1997) and Cohen (1995) raise serious question as to whether this professional style of reform at the local level will be successful. Consequently, strategies as proposed by Sizer (1996) that argue for reforms beginning in the school and working their way toward the system are unlikely to be successful. Instead, the enhanced role of the principal as education leader, and in fact the many keys to strong student performance, are likely to emerge as systemic policy changes , especially common student performance standards and devolved authority, potentiating stronger work at the local level.

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